

publication and incidental comments on this species in Britain and in Europe at the editorial address given inside the front cover.

### **Playing possum as an alternative to mate-refusal posture in *Pararge aegeria* (L.) (Lep.: Nymphalidae)**

Playing possum is a behaviour previously recognised among nymphalids (e.g., *Inachis io* L.) and pierids (e.g., *Gonepteryx rhamni* L.) as a predator escape mechanism (Dennis, R. L. H. 1984 *Entomologist's Gazette* **35**: 6-7; 1998 *Entomologist's Rec. J. Var.*, **110**: 115-116). This behaviour can be extended to *Pararge aegeria* but in response to a prolonged attempted courtship. The behaviour was recorded during observations along a transect on Alderley Edge (Cheshire) during September 17, 2003 13.40pm. The female lay flat on a nettle leaf, inert, as if completely dead. The male harassed it for a minimum of two sessions - lasting two and three minutes - separated by a short basking period 10cm away, the initial contact and attempted courtship having been missed. This involved much wing flapping and shaking and running about over the female and nettle leaves. During the second period, the female fell off the leaf landed on another low down in shade of the plant, in the process hanging briefly from a third by a single tarsal claw, all the time apparently limp and dead. Even so, the male followed it to this lower level and continued to molest it. Eventually, the male broke off and moved 25cm away to bask. On inspecting the female to determine its condition, it burst into flight and moved away strongly through the shade of the wood.

Dr Tim Shreeve informs me that he has described this behaviour - commonly observed by him during his research on the behaviour and ecology of the speckled wood - in his thesis (Shreeve, T.G. 1985 *The population biology of the speckled wood butterfly Pararge aegeria* (L.) *Satyrinae*. Ph.D. Thesis (CNAA), Oxford Polytechnic), that it is part of normal female mate refusal behaviour in this species if harassed by a male. He has also observed it in all three *Pararge* species (*P. xiphia* (Fabricius), *P. xiphioides* (Staudinger)), as well as in other Satyrines including *Lasiommata megera* (L.), *L. maera* (L.), *L. petropolitana* (Fabricius), *Lopinga achine* (Scopoli) and even *Maniola jurtina* (L.).- R. L. H. DENNIS, 4 Fairfax Drive, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 6EY.

### **An unusually late date for a Garden Tiger *Arctia caja* L. (Lep.: Arctiidae) in Devon**

On 25 October 2003, Brian Bwsher found a fresh specimen of a Garden Tiger moth outside his trap at Hennock, near Bovey Tracey, Devon. We can only assume that this was a second brood specimen or a migrant.- ROY MCCORMICK, 36 Paradise Road, Teignmouth, Devon.